

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 H-01 IO-13 NSC-05 SS-15
INR-10 SP-02 PM-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 ICA-11
PA-01 L-03 TRSE-00 PC-01 /083 R

DRAFTED BY HA:LMORIN:BJB
APPROVED BY HA:MSCHNEIDER
HA/ORM:JBROH-KAHN
EA/TIMBS:HMEINHEIT
H:DKINNEY

-----056003 112038Z /64

P 111934Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 203702

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, SHUM, TH, CB

SUBJECT: ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES

REF: BANGKOK 22776

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EMBASSY'S REQUEST, THE TEXT OF LETTER ON REFUGEES SENT TO CONGRESSMEN ON AUGUST 4 IS GIVEN BELOW. LETTER WAS FURNISHED DEPARTMENT BY THE WRITER. WE DO NOT AS YET HAVE ANY REQUESTS FROM CONGRESSMEN FOR COMMENTS.

2. WRITER OF LETTER IS ED STRINKO, A FORMER PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER ON STAFF OF ACTION. HE IS MARRIED TO A CAMBODIAN WHO WAS A LOCAL EMPLOYEE AT EMBASSY PNOM PENH. EARLIER THIS YEAR, STRINKO HELPED ORGANIZE PEOPLE UNITED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA AMONG LOCAL CAMBODIANS AND SYMPATHIZERS TO LOBBY ON HILL AND TO BRING ATTENTION OF

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PUBLIC TO CAMBODIAN SITUATION.

3. TEXT:
I WRITE TO YOU CONCERNING THE ABUSE OF REFUGEES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND. THE SITUATION I WRITE TO YOU ABOUT IS DIRECTED TOWARD CAMBODIAN REFUGEES BUT VIETNAMESE AND LAOTIAN REFUGEES ARE PROBABLY SUFFERING THE SAME FATE IN MANY CASES.

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AFTER THE FALL OF CAMBODIA IN APRIL 1975, THE THAI GOVERNMENT WAS FRIENDLY AND WARMHEARTED TOWARD CAMBODIAN REFUGEES. THEY WERE PLACED IN CAMPS ALONG THE THAI-KHMER BORDER AND REASONABLY WELL FED AND HOUSED. A SHORT TIME LATER, THE THAI GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO INCARCERATE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES FOR AS LONG AS SIX WEEKS BEFORE RELEASING THEM TO THE CAMPS.

IN JULY 1976, THE THAI MINISTRY OF INTERIOR INSTRUCTED THE THAI BORDER POLICE TO TREAT THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES AS IF THEY WERE SPIES; IN OTHER WORDS, THEY WERE TO BE KILLED AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVED IN THAILAND. FROM JULY 1976 TO FEBRUARY 1978 AS MANY AS 10,000 CAMBODIAN MALE REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA WERE KILLED BY THE THAI BORDER POLICE. FEMALE REFUGEES WERE RAPED AND SOLD INTO PROSTITUTION. THESE RAPES WERE OFTEN SAVAGE AND TOOK PLACE IN FRONT OF LARGE GROUPS OF PEOPLE. ONE FEMALE STUDENT, A VICTIM OF SUCH A RAPE, IS NOW IN CANADA AND HER NAME CAN BE PROVIDED. MOST WERE NOT FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO EVER MAKE IT TO A CAMP.

SOME INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS BEGAN TO ASK WHY THERE WERE NOT MORE REFUGEES COMING OUT OF CAMBODIA AND THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS MODIFIED ITS POLICIES TO SOME EXTENT. CURRENTLY OUT OF EVERY 100 REFUGEES WHO TRY TO

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ESCAPE FROM CAMBODIA, 80 ARE KILLED BY THE KHMER ROUGE, DIE OF STARVATION, LOOSE THEIR WAY OR ARE KILLED BY MINES. OUT OF THE REMAINING 20, ONLY 4 OR 5 REACH A THAI JAIL OR REFUGEE CAMP. THE REMAINING DISAPPEAR AFTER BEING INTERROGATED. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DR. MEN HUON IS ONE EXAMPLE OF SUCH A CASE.

THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF JAILS IN THAILAND TO WHICH CAMBODIAN REFUGEES HAVE BEEN SENT: 1) WHEN CAMBODIAN REFUGEES FIRST ARRIVE, THEY ARE PLACED IN A PRIMARY INTERROGATION CENTER. THESE JAILS ARE LOCATED ALONG THE THAI BORDER AT TRAT (KLANG YAI PROVINCE), PONG NAM RAN, TAP SAY (CHANTHABURI PROVINCE), ARANYAPRATHET, TAPYA, KABIN (PRACHINBURI PROVINCE), SURIN AND OBON PROVINCES. 2) AFTER THE INITIAL INTERROGATION, THE REFUGEE IS ALWAYS CAGED AND HANDCUFFED AND TRANSPORTED TO A JAIL IN BURIRAM OR DISAPPEARS ALTOGETHER. NAMES OF WITNESSES AND LOCATION OF GRAVE SITES CAN BE PROVIDED FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN INVESTIGATING THE SITUATION. 3) IF THE REFUGEE WAS SUSPECTED OF BEING A COMMUNIST SPY, THE THAI AUTHORITIES PLACED THE REFUGEE IN SIKIEU JAIL WHERE THE REFUGEES ARE TREATED WORSE THAN ANIMALS. CURRENTLY,

THERE ARE ABOUT 80 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES IN THAT JAIL.

4) AFTER SPENDING MONTHS, INDEED YEARS, IN A REFUGEE CAMP, SOME CAMBODIANS LEFT THE CAMP AND WENT TO BANGKOK TO SEEK HELP FROM VARIOUS EMBASSIES. ABOUT 80 OF THESE REFUGEES WERE CAUGHT AND PUT IN JAIL BY THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE. NO ONE KNOWS HOW LONG THEY WILL REMAIN IMPRISONED.

IN ADDITION TO THE JAILS, THERE ARE 4 REFUGEE CAMPS ALONG THE THAI-KHMER BORDER. THESE CAMPS INTERN MORE THAN 14,000 REFUGEES AND CONDITIONS ARE MISERABLE. AS MUCH AS 40PC OF ALL INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR REFUGEES FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF CORRUPT THAI OFFICIALS. IN ARANYAPRATHET CAMP, THERE ARE MORE THAN 6,000 KHMER
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REFUGEES. THE UN, HOWEVER, PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR ONLY 4,000. THE OTHERS HAVE NOT BEEN CLASSIFIED AS REFUGEES BY THE THAI GOVERNMENT BUT MUST SHARE THE SAME ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR CLASSIFIED REFUGEES. IN THIS CAMP, ROBBERY, DISEASE, MALNUTRITION, RAPE AND PROSTITUTION ARE VERY COMMON PROBLEMS. THE THAI GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY, WHO ARE IN CHARGE OF THE CAMP, ARE MOSTLY UNEDUCATED PEASANTS AND THEY DISPLAY A FEROCIOUS AND RACIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD CAMBODIAN REFUGEES. SINCE THE CAMP IS TERRIBLY OVERCROWDED, DIRTY, AND LACKING IN MINIMAL SANITATION, THOSE WHO WISH TO USE A TOILET MUST WAIT IN LONG LINES AND BEAR THE INCREDIBLE STENCH. THOSE WHO CANNOT WAIT OR STAND THE SMELL OFTEN WALK OUT OF THE CAMP INTO A NEARBY WOODED AREA. IF MALE REFUGEES ARE CAUGHT DOING THIS, THEY ARE BEATEN TO DEATH OR SO BADLY INJURED THAT THEY REQUIRE HOSPITALIZATION. FEMALES CAUGHT LEAVING THE CAMP ARE BEATEN AND RAPED.

THERE IS CONTACT BETWEEN THE THAI BORDER POLICE AND THE KHMER ROUGE BORDER GUARDS. REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA WILL BE RETURNED FOR A SMALL PRICE. IF ANY REFUGEE TRIES TO COMPLAIN OR TO BRING THIS SITUATION TO THE ATTENTION OF SOME OF THE INTERNAL OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, THAT REFUGEE IS ARRESTED, ACCUSED OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, PUT IN JAIL OR DISAPPEARS. MAIL FROM THE US, FRANCE OR ANY COUNTRY NEVER REACHES THE REFUGEES. MONEY ORDERS OR PACKAGES SENT TO HELP THE REFUGEES NEVER ARRIVE. MAIL FROM THE CAMPS DESCRIBING THE SITUATION INSIDE THE CAMPS NEVER REACHES THE OUTSIDE WORLD. IN THIS WAY, THE SITUATION HAS BEEN KEPT QUIET AND COVERED UP.

IN MID-JULY 1978, IENG SARY, THE KHMER ROUGE PRIME MINISTER, WENT TO BANGKOK ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT. THERE IS
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A CHANCE THAT PHNOM PENH AND BANGKOK MAY ESTABLISH
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. IF THIS HAPPENS, THE LIFE OF
THE KHMER REFUGEES IS IN GREATER DANGER. THE KHMER
ROUGE WOULD LIKELY ASK FOR THE RETURN OF ALL CAMBODIAN
REFUGEES. THIS, OF COURSE, WOULD BE A DEATH SENTENCE.
THE THAI AUTHORITIES ARE NOT OPPOSED TO SOLVING THE

REFUGEE SITUATION IN THIS MANNER. THE THAI AUTHORITIES
ACTUALLY FORCED THE RETURN OF 26 REFUGEES IN NOVEMBER
1975 ONLY TO SEE THEM KILLED BEFORE THEIR EYES.

OUR GOVERNMENT HAS MAINTAINED THAT WE CAN DO NOTHING
ABOUT THE SITUATION INSIDE CAMBODIA. HOWEVER, THIS IS
NOT THE CASE WITH THAILAND. I URGE THE PRESIDENT, THE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO
INVESTIGATE AND TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO END THE
ABUSE OF REFUGEES BY THE THAI GOVERNMENT. UNLESS WE
ACT QUICKLY, THERE MAY BE NO ONE LEFT TO HELP.

SINCERELY,

ED STRINKO

END OF TEXT. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE203702
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: LMORIN:BJB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780329-0459
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780872/aaaaciob.tel
Line Count: 199
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 93db8264-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 22776
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1765041
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES
TAGS: SREF, SHUM, TH, CB
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/93db8264-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014